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Programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

General and complete disarmament

Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.39

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

I. Requests contained in the draft resolution

1. Under the terms of operative paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 6 of draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.39, the General Assembly would:

(a) Decide, in order to facilitate further consideration on the implementation of the relevant recommendation contained in paragraph 27 of the report,[1] on a step-by-step basis among all States Members of the United Nations, in an open and transparent manner, to establish an open-ended working group, to meet for up to six one-week sessions starting in 2009, of which the two sessions foreseen in 2009 would be held in New York from 2 to 6 March and 13 to 17 July, respectively;

(b) Also decide that the open-ended working group would hold a one-day organizational session in New York by 27 February 2009 in order to agree on the organizational arrangements connected with the open-ended working group, including the dates and venues for its future substantive sessions;

[1] Report of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/89 to examine the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms (see A/63/334).

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(c) Further decide that the open-ended working group would, during 2009, further consider those elements in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts where consensus could be developed for their inclusion in an eventual legally binding treaty on the import, export and transfer of conventional arms, which would provide a balance giving benefit to all, with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other existing international obligations at the centre of such considerations, and to transmit an initial report from the open-ended working group to the General Assembly;

(d) Request the Secretary-General to transmit the replies of Member States,[2] and the report of the Group of Governmental Experts[1] to the open-ended working group and to render the group all necessary assistance, including the provision of essential background information and relevant documents.

II. Relationship of the requests to the programme of work for the biennium 2008-2009

2. The activities referred to above relate to (a) programme 1, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management; (b) programme 3, Disarmament; and (c) subprogramme 4, Support services, of programme 24, Management and support services, of the biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2008-2009.[3] They fall under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management; section 4, Disarmament; and section 28D, Office of Central Support Services, of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

III. Activities by which the requests would be implemented

3. Pursuant to operative paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 6 of draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.39, the Office for Disarmament Affairs would provide the necessary substantive services to convene the one-day organizational session and the two one-week sessions of the open-ended working group planned for 2009, all of which will be held in New York.

4. It is understood that the open-ended working group would hold three sessions in 2009 in New York and four sessions in 2010-2011 at venues to be determined at the organizational session to be held before 27 February 2009. The specifics of the sessions are detailed below:

(a) In 2009, an organizational session is to be held in New York in January/February 2009 for 1 day (total of 2 meetings);

(b) The first session is to be held in New York from 2 to 6 March 2009 (total of 10 meetings);

(c) The second session is to be held in New York from 13 to 17 July 2009 (total of 10 meetings);

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[2] A/62/278 (Part I), (Part II) and Add.1-4.

[3] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first session, Supplement No. 6* (A/61/6/Rev.1).

(d) In 2010-2011, the third session, to be held in February/March 2010, the fourth session, to be held in June/July 2010 and the fifth session, to be held in February/March 2011, would have the same conference-servicing requirements. Each session would last for 5 working days (total of 10 meetings per session);

(e) The sixth session, to be held in June/July 2011, would have the same conference-servicing requirements as the third, fourth and fifth sessions, which are detailed in paragraph (d) above, except for additional post-session documentation requirements, which would relate to the report of the open-ended working group to the General Assembly.

5. The venue for the four sessions in 2010-2011 is yet to be determined and will be discussed at the organizational session of the open-ended working group to be held no later than 27 February 2009. Should the venues be other than New York, this would constitute an exception to paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 40/243, by which the general principle is reaffirmed that, in drawing up the schedule of conferences and meetings, United Nations bodies shall plan to meet at their respective headquarters.

6. Pursuant to operative paragraph 5 of draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.39, the Office for Disarmament Affairs would transmit in 2009, an initial report from the open-ended working group to the General Assembly.

IV. Modification of the programme of work of 2008-2009 and the biennial programme plan for 2010-2011

7. In order to reflect the provisions of the draft resolution, the narrative of section 4, Disarmament, of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (A/62/6 (Sect. 4) and Corr.1) would be modified to amend the outputs already approved in respect of conventional arms issues. Subject to the decision of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, that narrative will be incorporated into a revised version of the programme of work of section 4 of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009. The required modifications are as follows:

Paragraph 4.35

Under "(a) Servicing of intergovernmental and expert bodies (regular budget)," add:

"(viii) An open-ended working group to further consider efforts within the United Nations to address the international trade in conventional arms: Substantive servicing of the meetings of the Group (22);"

Under "(a) (i) b. Parliamentary documentation", add the following to the existing paragraph:

"Initial report of the open-ended working group to further consider efforts within the United Nations to address the international trade in conventional arms (1)."

8. The relevant outputs pertaining to the third through the sixth sessions of the open-ended working group would be reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011.

V. Estimates of additional requirements

9. Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.39, the substantive servicing of the open-ended working group in 2009 will be provided from within existing capacity of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

10. Adoption of draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.39 and establishment of the open-ended working group in 2009 would constitute an addition to the revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2009, adopted by the Committee on Conferences, of one organizational and two substantive sessions of the open-ended working group.

11. The conference-servicing and other support services requirements for the meetings of the open-ended working group in 2009 are estimated in the amount of $1,225,000 (at current rates) broken down as follows: $1,181,000 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, and $44,000 under section 28D, Office of Central Support Services.

12. Resources in the amount of $2,305,000 (at current rates) would also be required for conference servicing and other support services for the four sessions of meetings of the open-ended working group to be organized in 2010-2011, broken down as follows: $2,225,000 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, and $80,000 under section 28D, Office of Central Support Services.

VI. Potential for absorption and contingency fund

13. No provisions have been made under sections 2 and 28D of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 for servicing the meetings of the open-ended working group in 2009.

14. It will be recalled that, under the procedures established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditure derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the programme budget. Under this procedure, if additional expenditures were proposed that exceeded the resources available from the contingency fund, the activities concerned would be implemented only through the redeployment of resources from low-priority areas or the modification of existing activities. Otherwise, such additional activities would have to be deferred to a later biennium.

15. The Secretariat has sought to identify areas from which resources can be redeployed to meet the additional requirements, relating to the conference-servicing and other support services requirements referred to in paragraph 11 above. It appears however, that adoption of the draft resolution is likely to be subject to a call for additional resources under sections 2 and 28E under the procedures that govern the use and operation of the contingency fund for the biennium 2008-2009.

16. With regard to the requirements for conference servicing and support services costs related to the meetings of the open-ended working group in the biennium 2010-2011 ($2,305,000), those will be considered within the framework of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011, subject to decisions of the Committee on Conferences to include those meetings in the programme of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for that biennium.

VII. Summary

17. **Accordingly, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.39, there would be additional resource requirements for the biennium 2008-2009 totalling $1,225,000 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management ($1,181,000), and section 28D, Office of Central Support Services ($44,000), of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009. The amount would represent a charge against the contingency fund and, as such, would require an additional appropriation for the biennium 2008-2009 to be approved by the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. The additional requirements for the biennium 2010-2011 would be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for that biennium.**